

Subject: Deputations from members of the public.

Date of meeting: 20 July 2023

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which one Member of the council, nominated by the mayor, may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the mayor and voted on without discussion that the spokesperson for the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

Notification of one Deputation has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

(1) Deputation concerning Flooding at Park Crescent

Supported by:
Jamie Graham
Tim Fleming
Susan Garlick
Ian Scoones
Victoria Taylor/Al Taylor
Adrienne Bloch
Henrietta Dombey

Councillor Rowkins, Chair of City Environment will reply.

Over the last few years, flash floods have repeatedly affected Park Crescent resulting in serious flood damage, with major costs to residents. House numbers 48-39 are especially vulnerable when flood water flows down Elm Grove and across Lewes Road, sometimes combining with flood water from Union Road.

With sudden heavy rainfall, current drainage arrangements are clearly insufficient. Floods are most frequent in the Autumn, but in June 2023 a major flood took place, when leaf fall was not preventing drainage. Widely shared dramatic videos of water flowing down Elm Grove and the floods in Park Crescent are available to illustrate the problem.

Residents have taken various measures to mitigate the impacts of flooding. These include: i) installing flood prevention barriers at pavement level; ii) formation of an early warning WhatsApp group; and iii) residents have purchased equipment to assist with opening storm drains and manhole covers to increase drainage. However, these are insufficient given the increasing severity of floods.

A number of factors have exacerbated the situation in recent years. These include:

- The removal of a barrier in Lewes Road during the road junction redesign in 2017, which means that water now flows from Elm Grove without getting diverted south towards the Level. This means that the full volume of water flows towards the houses in Park Crescent, with devastating consequences.
- Drains in the whole catchment area, and most notably around Park Crescent/Union Road/Lewes Road, fail to remove excess water as they become blocked with leaves during Autumn, but also are clearly insufficient given that flooding now occurs outside the high-risk season.

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- The moving of car parking to the other side of the road in Park Crescent has meant that sometimes cars are parked over drain covers, reducing drainage and making leaf clearance challenging.
 - We recommend that the Council undertakes a flood mitigation review for the area to explore different options to improve drainage. This should draw on wider expertise on flood management that may result in new solutions for the longer-term. More immediately, we propose the following urgent actions to complement residents' efforts:
- Reinstating a barrier in Lewes Road to allow the water flow to be disrupted and at least be partially diverted towards the Level, with the water flow slowed and dispersed.
- Increasing the number of storm drains along Elm Grove, Union Road, Lewes Road and Park Crescent to remove excess water into the mains drainage system.
- Annual cleaning of the drainage system, including removing roots and other blockages to increase drainage efficiency.
- Increasing the frequency and effectiveness of leaf clearing operations in the area from early October onwards.

Given that climate change is likely to continue to increase the likelihood of flooding, we believe that there is a need for a major review of flood management and drainage for this area of the city. This deputation requests that the Council urgently takes action across the areas outlined above. We believe that this provides an opportunity for the Council to pioneer an innovative response to climate change-induced flood impacts in Brighton, with this area as an important pilot.

Supporting information:

Images of the flooding June 2023 – more images and videos can be viewed [here](#)



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(2) Deputation concerning the closure of Mile Oak Library

Supported by:

Victoria Smith
David Allan
Penny Gilbey
Nicola Gonzalez-Swan
Liz Hodder
Alan Muir
Sarah Pain
Emily Smith

Councillor Pumm, Chair of Equalities, Community Safety & Human Rights Committee will reply.

We are asking that this meeting suspends the closure of Mile Oak Library and the removal of its £35, 000 costs from the Libraries budget whilst a greater effort is made to remove barriers to the local community's access to this service, to increase attendance and to find a more suitable venue for the library and its role as Mile Oak's last remaining community hub.

The decision to close the library was made without proper consultation with local community groups and organisations on probable impact, and without a user survey to find out why use had declined so dramatically. Proper efforts to reverse this decline were not made, including basics such as good signage and an examination of the effect of the greater difficulty entering the building post-COVID. A user survey was put out by Library services after the decision to close the library was made and its findings were not used to increase attendance.

Local people have cited the increased difficulty in entering the building, it's obscurity (many didn't realize it was there or thought it was PACA's library) and opening hours; as well as frequent unexpected closures within library hours, unheard buzzers and lack of lighting as playing a significant role in reducing or preventing them from visiting. This runs against the Service Level Agreement put in place in 2016 between PACA and Brighton and Hove Council when the old library was demolished to make way for the new school building.

Community libraries naturally cost more per visit to run, and whilst visitor numbers have fallen to such an extent that such costs are unusually high this can be changed.

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Mile Oak is a community with significant levels of deprivation which has lost the majority of services provided by its Childrens Centre and has no other community space for children and families, older people, those with disabilities, carers or other disadvantaged groups. The closure will impact most on these people, and its current inaccessibility is already impacting on them. The closure of Mile Oak Library removes the last free accessible space in the community, a space that needs to work harder and across council services. Once the library funding is lost to the community we know we will not regain it, whatever alternative venues are found.

Supporting Information:

